



Tortugas 2000 Milestones

May 22, 1999

The Tortugas 2000 Working Group comes to consensus on a preferred alternative for the Tortugas Ecological Reserve.

June 15, 1999

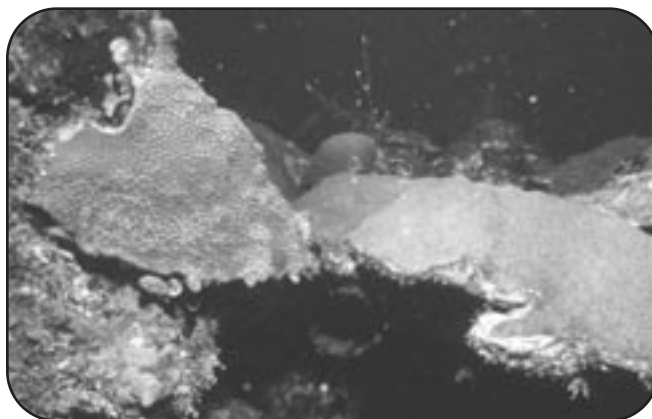
The Sanctuary Advisory Council unanimously approves the Tortugas 2000 Working Group's recommendation for a no-take ecological reserve with two components and forwards this recommendation to NOAA and the State of Florida.

December 9, 1999

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission meets in Islamorada and directs its staff to move forward on creating a no-fishing area for those portions of the proposed reserve in state waters. The Commission also agrees to hold joint public hearings with NOAA.

March 24, 2000

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council votes unanimously to consider establishing a no fishing area for those portions of the proposed Tortugas Ecological Reserve that are in Federal waters outside of the current Sanctuary boundary. The Joint Marine Reserve/Reef Fish Management Committees proposed an amendment to the Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan that would establish a marine reserve with the same boundaries as the proposed Tortugas South ecological reserve and in the portion of the proposed Tortugas North ecological reserve that resides in federal waters. Anchoring by all fishing vessels would also be prohibited.



Because it sits at the juncture of strong ocean currents, the proposed Tortugas Ecological Reserve has excellent potential for exporting the larvae of fish, lobster and other creatures downstream to help sustain marine life populations in the Florida Keys and the east coast of Florida.

Did You Know?

- Scientists identified a coral head from Sherwood Forest in the Tortugas to be 400 years old and determined it was actually a composite of two different coral species.
- The world's first marine protected area was established by the National Park Service in the Tortugas in 1935 (Fort Jefferson National Monument).
- The Tortugas was the location of the first tropical marine laboratory in the western hemisphere (Tortugas Marine Laboratory, est. 1904).
- The Tortugas are North America's only breeding ground for sooty terns, brown noddies, masked boobies and frigate birds, all of which depend upon healthy fish communities for their prey.

*Note: This article appeared in the Summer 2000 issue of the newsletter of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, **Sounding Line**. For more information, visit: floridakeys.noaa.gov.*